

Status: Path 1 of [Dialog Information Services via Modem]

Status: Initializing TCP/IP using (UseTelnetProto 1 ServiceID pto-dialog)
Trying 31060000009998...Open

DIALOG INFORMATION SERVICES

PLEASE LOGON:

***** HHHHHHHH SSSSSSSS?

Status: Signing onto Dialog

ENTER PASSWORD:

***** HHHHHHHH SSSSSSSS? *****

Welcome to DIALOG

Status: Connected

Dialog level 04.12.02D

Last logoff: 29aug04 22:06:03

Logon file405 03sep04 19:52:42

*** ANNOUNCEMENT ***

--Connect Time joins DialUnits as pricing options on Dialog.
See HELP CONNECT for information.

--SourceOne patents are now delivered to your email inbox
as PDF replacing TIFF delivery. See HELP SOURCE1 for more
information.

--Important Notice to Freelance Authors--
See HELP FREELANCE for more information

NEW FILES RELEASED

***F-D-C Gold/Silver Sheet (File 184)

***BIOSIS Toxicology (File 157)

***IPA Toxicology (File 153)

UPDATING RESUMED

RELOADED

***Toxfile (File 156)

REMOVED

>>> Enter BEGIN HOMEBASE for Dialog Announcements <<<
>>> of new databases, price changes, etc. <<<

CORE is set ON as an alias for 15,9,623,810,275,624,813,636,621,16,160,148,20,77,35,583,
2,65,233,99,473,474,475,348,349,347,278,634,256.

HIGHLIGHT set on as '*'

KWIC is set to 50.

* * * *

SYSTEM:HOME

Cost is in DialUnits

Menu System II: D2 version 1.7.9 term=ASCII

*** DIALOG HOMEBASE(SM) Main Menu ***

Information:

1. Announcements (new files, reloads, etc.)
2. Database, Rates, & Command Descriptions
3. Help in Choosing Databases for Your Topic
4. Customer Services (telephone assistance, training, seminars, etc.)
5. Product Descriptions

Connections:

UPDATE
Dialog,
WORD / MPL
SEARCH
9-3-2004
B

6. DIALOG(R) Document Delivery
7. Data Star(R)

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/H = Help

/L = Logoff

/NOMENU = Command Mode

Enter an option number to view information or to connect to an online service. Enter a BEGIN command plus a file number to search a database (e.g., B1 for ERIC).

?B CORE

```
>>>          77 does not exist
>>>          278 does not exist
>>>2 of the specified files are not available
      03sep04 19:52:48 User243008 Session D127.1
      $0.00    0.198 DialUnits FileHomeBase
      $0.00 Estimated cost FileHomeBase
      $0.02 TELNET
      $0.02 Estimated cost this search
      $0.02 Estimated total session cost    0.198 DialUnits
```

SYSTEM:OS - DIALOG OneSearch

File 15:ABI/Inform(R) 1971-2004/Sep 03

(c) 2004 ProQuest Info&Learning

***File 15: Alert feature enhanced for multiple files, duplicate removal, customized scheduling. See HELP ALERT.**

File 9:Business & Industry(R) Jul/1994-2004/Sep 03

(c) 2004 The Gale Group

File 623:Business Week 1985-2004/Sep 02

(c) 2004 The McGraw-Hill Companies Inc

File 810:Business Wire 1986-1999/Feb 28

(c) 1999 Business Wire

File 275:Gale Group Computer DB(TM) 1983-2004/Sep 03

(c) 2004 The Gale Group

File 624:McGraw-Hill Publications 1985-2004/Sep 02

(c) 2004 McGraw-Hill Co. Inc

***File 624: Homeland Security & Defense and 9 Platt energy journals added**

Please see HELP NEWS624 for more

File 813:PR Newswire 1987-1999/Apr 30

(c) 1999 PR Newswire Association Inc

File 636:Gale Group Newsletter DB(TM) 1987-2004/Sep 03

(c) 2004 The Gale Group

File 621:Gale Group New Prod.Annou.(R) 1985-2004/Sep 03

(c) 2004 The Gale Group

File 16:Gale Group PROMT(R) 1990-2004/Sep 03

(c) 2004 The Gale Group

***File 16: Alert feature enhanced for multiple files, duplicate removal, customized scheduling. See HELP ALERT.**

File 160:Gale Group PROMT(R) 1972-1989

(c) 1999 The Gale Group

File 148:Gale Group Trade & Industry DB 1976-2004/Sep 03

(c) 2004 The Gale Group

***File 148: Alert feature enhanced for multiple files, duplicate removal, customized scheduling. See HELP ALERT.**

File 20:Dialog Global Reporter 1997-2004/Sep 03

(c) 2004 The Dialog Corp.

File 35:Dissertation Abs Online 1861-2004/Aug

(c) 2004 ProQuest Info&Learning

File 583:Gale Group Globalbase(TM) 1986-2002/Dec 13

(c) 2002 The Gale Group

***File 583: This file is no longer updating as of 12-13-2002.**

File 2:INSPEC 1969-2004/Aug W4

(c) 2004 Institution of Electrical Engineers

***File 2: Alert feature enhanced for multiple files, duplicates**

removal, customized scheduling. See HELP ALERT.

File 65:Inside Conferences 1993-2004/Aug W5

(c) 2004 BLDSC all rts. reserv.

File 233:Internet & Personal Comp. Abs. 1981-2003/Sep

(c) 2003 EBSCO Pub.

File 99:Wilson Appl. Sci & Tech Abs 1983-2004/Jul

(c) 2004 The HW Wilson Co.

File 473:FINANCIAL TIMES ABSTRACTS 1998-2001/APR 02

(c) 2001 THE NEW YORK TIMES

***File 473: This file will not update after March 31, 2001.**

It will remain on Dialog as a closed file.

File 474:New York Times Abs 1969-2004/Sep 02

(c) 2004 The New York Times

File 475:Wall Street Journal Abs 1973-2004/Sep 01

(c) 2004 The New York Times

File 348:EUROPEAN PATENTS 1978-2004/Aug W05

(c) 2004 European Patent Office

File 349:PCT FULLTEXT 1979-2002/UB=20040902,UT=20040826

(c) 2004 WIPO/Univentio

File 347:JAPIO Nov 1976-2004/May(Updated 040903)

(c) 2004 JPO & JAPIO

***File 347: JAPIO data problems with year 2000 records are now fixed.**

Alerts have been run. See HELP NEWS 347 for details.

File 634:San Jose Mercury Jun 1985-2004/Sep 02

(c) 2004 San Jose Mercury News

File 256:TecInfoSource 82-2004/Jul

(c)2004 Info.Sources Inc

Set Items Description

--- ----

?(report or record or log or history) (5n) (clickthrough or click-through or clickthru or click-thru or (click (2n) thru) or (click (2n) through) or surfing or surf or travel or activity) (5n) (ad or advertisement)

>>>When using accession numbers with KEEP in OneSearch, you

>>>must use the FROM option to specify a file number.

?s (report or record or log or history) (5n) (clickthrough or click-through or clickthru or click-thru or (click (2n) thru) or (click (2n) through) or surfing or surf or travel or activity) (5n) (ad or advertisement)

Processing

Processed 10 of 27 files ...

Processing

Processing

Processed 20 of 27 files ...

Completed processing all files

10236067 REPORT

4555520 RECORD

540926 LOG

3314166 HISTORY

2143 CLICKTHROUGH

0 CLICK-THROUGH

40 CLICKTHRU

0 CLICK-THRU

1346248 CLICK

74680 THRU

898 CLICK(2N)THRU

1346248 CLICK

19050029 THROUGH

26393 CLICK(2N)THROUGH

108688 SURFING

141751 SURF

2695837 TRAVEL

3424785 ACTIVITY

1457659 AD

172857 ADVERTISEMENT

S1 282 (REPORT OR RECORD OR LOG OR HISTORY) (5N) (CLICKTHROUGH OR CLICK-THROUGH OR CLICKTHRU OR CLICK-THRU OR (CLICK (2N) THRU) OR (CLICK (2N) THROUGH) OR SURFING OR SURF OR

TRAVEL OR ACTIVITY) (5N) (AD OR ADVERTISEMENT)

?s s1 and (advertising or advertised)

282 S1

3858265 ADVERTISING

159019 ADVERTISED

S2 201 S1 AND (ADVERTISING OR ADVERTISED)

?s s2 and (geographic or demographic or coordinate or gps or position)

201 S2

573027 GEOGRAPHIC

329703 DEMOGRAPHIC

406991 COORDINATE

188378 GPS

6683382 POSITION

S3 65 S2 AND (GEOGRAPHIC OR DEMOGRAPHIC OR COORDINATE OR GPS OR POSITION)

?s s3 and (network or web or internet)

65 S3

7873386 NETWORK

7383074 WEB

6836112 INTERNET

S4 59 S3 AND (NETWORK OR WEB OR INTERNET)

?s s4 and (

>>>Possible typing error near start of command

?s s4 and (track or tracking or tracked)

59 S4

2428485 TRACK

846704 TRACKING

195706 TRACKED

S5 35 S4 AND (TRACK OR TRACKING OR TRACKED)

?s s4 and (date and (id or identifier or identificaiton or identity) and time and (geographic or demographic) and sponsor and affiliate)

59 S4

6396945 DATE

897191 ID

97577 IDENTIFIER

115 IDENTIFICAITON

723545 IDENTITY

22786840 TIME

573027 GEOGRAPHIC

329703 DEMOGRAPHIC

489712 SPONSOR

613125 AFFILIATE

S6 1 S4 AND (DATE AND (ID OR IDENTIFIER OR IDENTIFICAITON OR IDENTITY) AND TIME AND (GEOGRAPHIC OR DEMOGRAPHIC) AND SPONSOR AND AFFILIATE)

?t s6/6,k;1

6/6,K/1 (Item 1 from file: 349)

DIALOG(R)File 349:(c) 2004 WIPO/Univentio. All rts. reserv.

00788757 **Image available**

**METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR DELIVERY OF TARGETED *ADVERTISING* AND CONTENT
BASED ON USER INTERACTION WITH ONLINE QUERIES ON A WIDE AREA *NETWORK*
PROCEDE ET APPAREIL DE PUBLICITE CIBLEE AU CONTENU BASE SUR DES ENQUETES EN
LIGNE SUR UN RESEAU A GRANDE ECHELLE**

Publication Language: English

Filing Language: English

Fulltext Availability:

Detailed Description

Claims

Fulltext Word Count: 10691

Publication Year: 2001

**METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR DELIVERY OF TARGETED *ADVERTISING* AND CONTENT
BASED ON USER INTERACTION WITH ONLINE QUERIES ON A WIDE AREA *NETWORK***

Fulltext Availability:

Detailed Description

Claims

English Abstract

A method and apparatus for creating, archiving, searching, and delivering targeted content within a specified *Web* page are provided. The critical need for businesses to deliver and for computer users to receive targeted advertisements based on a user's previous online interaction is satisfied. As computer users "surf" the *Web*, their interactions with various queries and polls appearing on specified *Web* pages give information about their preferences and dislikes. In a preferred embodiment of the invention, various interactive queries or polls are used to encourage user participation in these surveys. The *advertising* and poll delivery system keeps track of each user's participation in the surveys, and based on the answers a user provides, the system builds a psychographic profile for that particular user. Utilizing a graphical user interface, marketers, *advertising* agencies, and other entities then use this data to create a marketing campaign that will appeal to specific segments of the online *demographic* population. The *advertising* and poll delivery system thus allows marketers to integrate the results of interactive polls into directed *advertising* and to select when and where such *advertising* should be delivered.

French Abstract

L'invention porte sur un procede et un appareil de creation, archivage, recherche et obtention de contenus cibles de pages donnees du *Web* repondant a un besoin pressant des affaires, pour fournir, et des utilisateurs d'ordinateurs, pour acquerir, des publicites cibles fonctions des interactions anterieures en ligne. Alors que les utilisateurs d'ordinateurs naviguent sur le *Web*, leurs interactions avec differentes demandes et sondages apparaissant sur des pages specifiques du *Web* fournissent des indications sur leurs preferences et aversions. Dans l'execution preferree de l'invention, on utilise differents sondages et demandes pour encourager la participation...

Detailed Description

METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR DELIVERY OF TARGETED
ADVERTISING AND CONTENT BASED ON USER INTERACTION WITH
ONLINE QUERIES ON A WIDE AREA *NETWORK*
CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

This application claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Application
Serial Number 60/155,071, filed September 21, 1999, pursuant...

...19(e), which application is specifically incorporated by reference
herein.

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...otherwise reserves all rights whatsoever.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

The present invention relates generally to a centralized polling system
utilizing *Internet* technology, and more particularly, to aggregating
content and delivering interactive queries or polls and other targeted
content to computer users through *Web* pages.

2. Description of Related Art

Traditionally, *advertising* campaigns have attempted to target and
maximize specific consumer interactivity by designing particular types of
advertisements for a specific media. While somewhat directed, such
advertising campaigns are still broad based appeals to large
demographic

segments, with no material customization to the needs, desires, or attitudes of one specific individual. With the advent of the *Internet* and e-commerce, a form of directed *advertising* has developed. On the *Internet*, advertisements frequently appear on *Web* pages, often in the form of a banner ad prominently located on one or more *Web* pages. Since the *Internet* enables real-time

interactivity, monitoring, and tracking, it is possible to know when a user views a *Web* page and when a user selects a particular banner ad. While monitoring and tracking a user's online behavior may be helpful to achieve better...

...other systems have tried incorporating online polls. However, difficulties in establishing and managing a system for online polls have prevented their industry-wide acceptance. Most *Web* sites that use online polls create and manage their own online polling activities. Creating and managing their own online polls is quite limited...

...the case of outsourcing polling software, high costs associated with licensing fees or other conditions of use (e.g., computer users sent to outsourcer's *Web* site to view banner ads) exist as high hurdles.

Thus, there is a long-awaited and much-needed transformation in the way businesses and individuals utilize the *Internet*. As *Internet* portals, e-commerce vendors, and various *Web* content publishers continue to search for ways to maximize the interactive capabilities of the *Internet*, the use of online polls has emerged as a popular form of interactive content. The basic

mechanics of online polls capture the essence of the *Internet*, namely multimedia interactivity. The *Internet* requires at least two (2) people to send information back and forth in order to interact - whether in the form of chat

rooms, message boards, email, *Web* pages, or polls. Whether a business wants to increase brand exposure, syndicate content, identify user interest, or

generate leads and collect information, online polls are one of the most effective vehicles to do this on the *Internet*. For example, polls that are onequestion surveys on topics ranging from current events to consumer interests

give respondents instant feedback on the tallied results. As poll usage continues to grow across *Web* sites, *Web* publishers and marketers will have an inherent need for a centralized poll management system. It would thus be

highly desirable to not only provide a centralized system to manage the polling activities for *Web* publishers, but also to prevent the duplication of user responses, collect useful data on users' declared preferences, and to create

the infrastructure to make polling effective and profitable for both *Web*

publishers and marketers.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention satisfies the critical need for a centralized polling system with a database having ad serving...

...variety of entertainment sources (e.g., television, movies, print media) and marketing

sources (e.g., branded products and services) to syndicate that content across multiple *Web* sites on behalf of *Web* publishers and marketers/advertisers. As computer users "surf" the *Web*, their interactions

with the various queries or polls appearing on popular *Web* sites give information about their preferences and dislikes. In a preferred embodiment of the invention, various interactive queries or polls are used to encourage user participation in these surveys. The *advertising*

and poll delivery system keeps track of each user's participation in the surveys, and based on the answers a user provides, the system builds a psychographic profile for that particular user. Utilizing a graphical user interface, marketers, *advertising* agencies, and other entities use this data to create a marketing campaign that will appeal to specific segments of the online *demographic* population. The System thus allows marketers and content providers to interact with each other and enables marketers to integrate the results of interactive polls into directed *advertising* and to select when and where such *advertising* should be delivered. Furthermore, in order to further refine the psychographic profiles of users, a truly unique feature of the invention allows users to modify...targeted content delivered to each user will be more relevant and useful. The present invention also implements a revenue model which provides incentives for affiliated *Web* sites to allow the delivery of polls and *advertising* to one or more of its *Web* pages.

A more complete understanding of the present invention will be afforded to those skilled in the art, as well as a realization of additional...

...to the
appended sheets of drawings that will first be described briefly.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Fig. 1 is a block diagram illustrating the *network* (WAN) in which 15 information is delivered to users in the form of *Web* pages containing polls

and queries in accordance with the invention;

Fig. 2A is an illustration of a sample entertainment opinion poll;

Fig. 2B is an...

...is a flowchart outlining the processes that occur within the Marketer User Interface; and

Fig. 6 is flowchart outlining the processes that occur within the *Affiliate* User Interface.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

Overview

Individuals who use the *Internet* are often confronted with numerous banners, advertisements, and other information that seek the attention of those individuals. The present invention deploys interactive queries or polls to appeal to and entertain *Internet* users, obtain their interest, encourage their responsive interaction, and collect consumer data based on that interaction.

The collected data is the basis of building meaningful psychographic profiles that are used to target *advertising* to specific individuals instantly or at some point later in *time*.

There are preferably five parties who participate in the operation of an embodiment of the present invention. The first party includes the end-user

("Users"), namely persons who use the *Internet* to read and view various content existing on the World Wide *Web*. The second party comprises of *Web* site affiliates ("Affiliates") who agree to display interactive queries/polls or certain *advertising* on one or more of its *Web* pages as selected and delivered in accordance with the operation of the present invention. The third party consists of marketers, *advertising* agencies, sponsors, or other entities

("Marketers") that create marketing campaigns, generate poll questions, and select the placement of ads in order to promote specified services and goods.

This group includes parties who wish to *sponsor* certain polls in exchange for

advertising space. The fourth party consists of news agencies, media companies, or any other businesses ("Content Providers") that provide branded poll questions such as entertainment opinion...

...2A and 213, and supply the various poll data to be delivered to users. Finally, the fifth party consist of the entity that operates the *advertising*/poll delivery infrastructure ("System") that determines when and where to deliver either an advertisement or a poll depending on the nature of the User currently...

...appreciated that a Client may play multiple roles in its involvement with the present invention. For example, a single company may serve as: (1) an *Affiliate* by having certain polls or advertisements appear on their entertainment *Web* pages; (2) a Marketer by developing and/or sponsoring ad campaigns to appear on other *Web* sites; and (3) a Content Provider by serving as a source for entertainment trivia polls. It should also be appreciated that in the present invention, an *Affiliate* 10 may create many different types of polls from two separate families of polls namely, internal and external polls. As their names suggest, the internal family of polls contain those polls that are created for use only in its own *Web* sites while the external family of polls contain those polls that are created for use on any *Web* site, including their own. Other than this distinction, no other 15 differences exist between the internal and external family of polls. In other System

Referring now to Fig. 1, a block diagram is illustrated of a wide area *network* (WAN) in which information is delivered to users in the form of *Web* pages containing polls and queries in accordance with the invention. It is anticipated that the present System operate with a plurality of computers which are coupled together on a communications *network*, such as the *Internet* or a WAN. Fig. 1 depicts a *network* that includes a user computer 110 that communicates with the System 120 and the *Affiliate* *Web* site 170 through communication links that include the *Internet* 150. The *Affiliate* 170, Marketer 180, and Content Provider 188 are also connected to the System 120 and communicate with the administrator server 132 within the System 120 through the *Internet* 150.

Each one of the user 110, *Affiliate* 170, Marketer 180, and Content Provider 188 may include any type of computing device that allows the operator to interactively browse *Web* sites, such as a personal computer (PC) that includes a *Web* browser application 112, 176, 182, 186 or 190 executing

respectively thereon (e.g., Microsoft *Internet* Explorer TM or Netscape Communicator TM). The *Affiliate* *Web* site 170 also includes a *Web* server ...documents

0 to the user computer 110 using the HyperText Transport Protocol (HTTP).

Currently, HTML 4.0 is the standard used for generating *Web* documents, though it should be appreciated that other coding conventions could also be

used within the scope of the present invention. The *Web* server 172 accesses a store of HTML documents 174 that can be requested, retrieved, and viewed at the user computer 110 via the *Web* browser 112. It should be

appreciated that many different user computers may be communicating with the *Web* server 172 at the same *time*.

Within the System 120, the internal management tools 122 are what the internal staff use to manage operation of the present invention. Using the internal...

...122, the System staff, for example, approve and classify all the content into their right categories, view Client records, and start and stop individual polling/*advertising* campaigns. The internal management tools

122 are connected to a staging database server 124 which holds a copy of the live main database server 128...

...changes are first made to the staging database server 124 and then replicated to the live main database server 128 in a set interval of *time* (e.g., every 15 minutes). The main database server 128 is the storage area for all activities of the System 120. All of the poll/ad content and User data are stored in the main database server 128 and is backed up all of the *time* in the backup system 126.

The Clients of the System 120 communicate with the administration server 132 to manage their individual accounts within the System...

...intervals (e.g., 1 0 every 15 minutes). The ad server 134 and the poll server 136 are the main front end components to the *Internet* 150. These cluster of application servers will deliver various polls and advertisements to the user's *Web* browser 112. Neither the ad server 134 nor the poll server 136 have much logic within the components, since both servers rely completely on the... and poll server 136 on the other hand. The queue server 138 handles three main functions. First, it keeps track of each of the individual *Affiliate* *Web* sites and keeps a list of polls ready to serve per individual *Web* site. Second, it keeps track of individual Users and maintains a list of targeted ads to deliver to each User. Third, it functions as a...

...be necessary to constantly read and write to the main database server 128.

Delivered Content

As generally known in the art, a user identifies a *Web* page that is desired to be viewed at the user computer 1 1 0 by communicating an HTTP request from the browser application 112. The HTTP request includes the Uniform Resource Locator (URL) of the desired *Web* page, which may correspond to an HTML document 174 stored at the *Affiliate* *Web* site 170.

The HTTP request is then routed to the *Web* server 172 via the *Internet* 150.

The *Web* server 172 then retrieves/generates the HTML document 174 identified by the URL, and communicates the HTML document across the *Internet* 1 5 0 to the browser application 1 1 2. The user computer 1 1 0 is then able to show the destination *Web* page 160 through its *Web* browser 112.

Unlike a conventional *Web* page, however, the *Affiliate* *Web* page 160 displays additional content such as queries, polls, surveys, sponsored content, or other targeted content, referred to collectively herein as polls 162.

Although for...

...to see along with the available movie choices followed by a subsequent panel showing the streaming video.

Queries, polls, surveys, and advertisement appearing on the *affiliate* *Web* page 160 appear in a simple question-and-answer type of format.

Referring back to Figs. 2A and 2B, branded polls such as entertainment opinion...the user makes his choice, the user will select the "Submit" button 216 and 230, respectively, to post his answer into the polling database. The *Affiliate* *Web* page 160 will refresh and the System 120 will provide the user with the results of the poll 218 and 232. The preferred embodiment of the invention will refresh the same exact content of the *Affiliate* *Web* page 160 while replacing the

polling box with the results panel (or the next panel to be displayed within the poll).

Therefore, the *Affiliate* *Web* page 160 will receive multiple user impressions.

In another embodiment of the invention, the System 120 will only replace the polling box with the results panel (or the next panel to be displayed within the poll) without refreshing the other contents of the *Affiliate* *Web* page 160. As I 0 the System 120 delivers the results of the poll to the user, the System 120 also incorporates delivery of appropriate...

...Content Provider designs "creatives" 212, 2207 226, and 234 that appear above the questions and results.

Other forms of polls may be incorporated into the *Affiliate* *Web* page 1 5 160. Direct response polls 240 as seen in Fig. 2C are aimed at obtaining specific user information. As such, certain incentives such...

...the privacy statement or the detailed information. Once the user The user then selects the "Submit" button 244 to proceed to the next step. The *Web* page 160 will refresh (again, although the entire *Web* page will refresh, only the contents within the poll box will change in substance) and the user will be asked to provide personal information 248...

...provided at the bottom of the data entry panel 246. Once the user enters the personal information 248 and selects the "Submit" button 250, the *Web* page 160 will refresh once more and the advertiser information will appear ...as shown in Fig. 2F. These polls operate in the same manner as the other polls described above.

In operation of the present invention, an *Internet* user "surfs" from one *Web* page to another until he reaches an *Affiliate* *Web* page 160 containing a poll 162. The poll 162 may be any one of those shown in Fig. 2A through 2D, but will usually consist...

...of these polls is to start an interactive dialogue with the users, so that the users see multiple screens and interact with targeted content and *advertising*.

Referring back to Fig. 1 , in order to deliver such polls 162 within the *Affiliate* *Web* page 160, the particular HTIVIL document 174 that is retrieved has a snippet of code written in JavaScript that instructs the *Web* browser application 1 1 2 of the user computer 1 1 0 to communicate with the poll server 136 of the System 120. Each snippet of code contains the *Affiliate* *ID* and information concerning the look and feel of the polls that the *Affiliate* has previously defined. The System 120 determines what kind of content to serve within that space designated on the *Affiliate* *Web* page 160. An example of the snippet of code written in JavaScript is as follows.

```
<script language = "javascript" src =  
"http:Hserver.interpolls.com/poll.cfm...the snippet code is a Client-side  
javascript ("CSJS") code that requests further CSJS from the poll 1 0  
server 136. Therefore the user's *Web* browser 112 contacts the poll  
server 136 and the poll server 136 in turn retrieves a poll data, then  
generates a CSJS code that will display a specific poll and sends it to  
the user. Once the  
CSJS reaches the user computer 110, the user's *Web* browser 112 will  
execute the code and generate the poll.
```

Tagging a User

As mentioned earlier, the online interaction between the user and the

poll forms the basis on which that user's psychographic profile is developed.

As such, tagging a user after that user is confronted with a *Web* page 160 containing a poll 162 is critical in order to track that individual's behavior for future delivery of targeted *advertising*. One of ordinary skill in the art would appreciate that several methods can be used to tag the user. The user's IP address and...

...and therefore noting a user's IP address is not a suitable way to uniquely identify one single person. Also, users who connect through an *Internet* Service Provider (ISP) get a dynamically assigned IP address. Therefore, a user is most likely to have a different IP address each *time* he connects through an ISP.

A cookie is a piece of information that a *Web* site, using the user *Web* browser's 112 facilities, places on the hard disk drive of a user's machine for future use. Cookies are useful because they allow a *Web* server to store its own information about a user on the user's own computer. Typically, a cookie stores a unique number identifying a user file to determine that particular user's historical interactions with poll questions. Cookie files can only be read, however, by the *Web* site that creates them. Specifically, the Uniform Resource Locator (URL) specified in the cookie must be the same as the *Web* site that the user is surfing in order for the browser to send the cookie to the *Web* site. Therefore, in the preferred embodiment of the invention, the cookies are placed on the user computer 110 by the System 120 and not by the individual *Affiliate* *Web* site 170. Since an *Affiliate* *web* page 160 may contain information from multiple sources, as the user's *Web* browser 176 communicates with the System 120 to retrieve the next set of javascript code, the System 120 can read and place the cookie using...

...by accessing the cookie file that it placed previously.

As such, referring to Fig. 3A, at step 310, when a user retrieves a specific *Web* page 160 (i.e., a particular URL) of an *Affiliate* *Web* site 170, the user's *Web* browser 112 contacts the System 120 for a new poll at step 312.

Then, at step 314, the System 120 determines whether that user has previously interacted with a poll by searching for the System User *ID* cookie.

If the user does not have a System User *ID* cookie, then the System serves the next poll in the *Affiliate* *Web* site's queue of polls to serve at step 316. In

the case the user has a System User *ID* cookie set, then the System 120 retrieves the System User *ID* cookie at step 318 and pulls up the user's voting

history at step 320. Next, at step 322, the System 120 goes through in sequence of all the polls in the *Affiliate* *Web* site's sequence and looks for a poll that the user has not yet voted. If such a poll is found at step 324, then...

...then the System 120 proceeds to step 328 where the results of random polls that the user has previously answered and fits in the current *Affiliate* *Web* site's categories are shown.

Referring now to Fig. 313, once the poll is delivered, the user interacts with the poll and answers the presented...

...side JavaScript embedded in the poll sets a temporary cookie to signal that the user has just voted. Next, at step 334, the user's *Web* browser 112 contacts the System 120 and the user's vote is recorded. The

System 120 then determines whether the user already has a System User *ID* cookie at step 336. If the user does not have a System User *ID* cookie, the System 120 proceeds to step 338 where the new User *ID* and a new User Profile is created in the System database. Then at step 340 the System User *ID* cookie is set and the poll results are returned to the user's *Web* browser at step 344. If it is determined at step 336 that the user already has a System User *ID* cookie, the poll information is added to the user's voting history at step 342 and the poll results are returned to the user's *Web* browser at step 344.

Client Interface

The present invention provides a forum in which Clients (i.e., Content Providers, Marketers, and Affiliates) utilize polling technology and targeted content to effectively conduct *advertising* and marketing campaigns. To facilitate the interaction of these several Clients with the System 120, the preferred embodiment of the invention provides a Client Interface...

...Providers utilize the Content Provider

User Interface ("CPUI") are described in Fig. 4. At step 400, when the Content Providers access the CPUI via the *Web* browser 190 on their computer 188, the Content Providers have several options available. Using the CPUI, the Content Providers can: (1) manage their polls; (2)...step 400. With such a strict approval process and organizational structure, the System Content Provider poll library serves as an invaluable tool at a later *time*, since potential sponsors search this library for the appropriate set of polls to *sponsor*.

Content Providers may also choose to receive real-*time* reports on their content traffic through the use of the CPUI. Upon the Content Provider's selection of this option, the System 120 proceeds to...

...System 120 will provide reports on how the Content Provider's polls are performing and generating revenue. The data will display and analyze polls, sponsors, *Web* sites, responses, and Users. If the Content Provider selects a particular *sponsor* and a specific *date* range, the System 120 will proceed to 0 step 422 and will furnish the following type reports: (i) number of impressions per poll; (ii) number...

...viii) response yield percentage per answer choice; (ix) volunteered 5 information such as answers to a specific question, mailing address, email address; (x) the different *Web* sites to which the polls were delivered; and (xi) the categories of the different *Web* sites to which the polls were delivered.

Affiliate *Web* sites that display the various polls and advertisements are grouped into a plurality of different categories. In the preferred embodiment of the invention, for example...

...Entertainment; (5) Teens; (6) during the registration process. Below these main categories, there will also be sub-categories available to more accurately describe the various *Web* sites as the *network* of affiliates grows. The categorization process is used for Content Providers and Marketers to determine which *Web* sites should display their poll and advertisement campaigns.

If the Content Provider selects a particular poll and a specific *date* range, the System 120 will proceed to step 424 and will furnish the following type of reports: (i) number of impressions delivered; (ii) number of...

...number of responses per answer; (iv) response yield percentage; (v) response yield percentage per answer choice; (vi) list of sponsors; (vii) number of responses per *sponsor*; (viii) number of responses per answer choice per *sponsor*; (ix) response yield percentage per *sponsor*; and

(x)

response yield percentage per answer choice per *sponsor*. These reports enable the Content Providers to view which polls are popular and which are not, thus allowing the Content Providers to adjust their new...revenue they have earned from past and current periods, as well as other account and billing information. When 5 the Content Provider selects a particular *sponsor* and a specific *date* range 432, the System 120 provides the following types of reports: (i) revenue calculated per *sponsor* per marketing campaign; and (ii) dollar amount representing the total number of poll responses by sponsored poll multiplied by the unit revenue per response.

There are other options available for Content Providers through the CPUL If Content Providers choose to establish content control - decide as to what type of *Web* sites are able to host and display their content ("target *Web* sites"), the System 120 will proceed to step 440. As mentioned previously, in the preferred embodiment of the invention, Content Providers display their polls and *advertising* material on their own *Web* pages as well as on the *Affiliate* *Web* pages. Thus, it is important for the Content Providers to have control over which Affiliates host and display their polls and *advertising* content. There will be instances where Content Providers will not want their branded content being displayed at certain types of *Web* sites because of the content contained in those *Web* sites. For example, a movie studio that provides entertainment trivia polls may not wish that their logo, trademark, or other associated *advertising* material appear on adult-oriented *Web* sites. In order to facilitate this control, the System 120 at step 440 provides Content Providers with several content control choices. Upon choosing, a Content Provider may, at step 442, create a list (i.e., exclusion list) of *Affiliate* *Web* sites which should be excluded from hosting and displaying that Content Provider's polls and sponsored advertisements. In addition, the Content Provider may, at step...

...exclusion list.

The Content Providers can also select which Affiliates will display their polls and sponsored advertisements by setting a "Content Rating" range of target *Web* sites. In the preferred embodiment of the invention, all Affiliates 10 are required to rate both the content and appropriate audience for the material appearing on their *Web* pages through an established Content Rating guideline (i.e., Rated G, PG-13, R, etc.). Thus, the System 120 allows Content Providers another option in addition to the direct exclusion lists to monitor which *Affiliate* *Web* sites will host and display their polls and advertisements. If Content Providers select to establish the Content Rating range of the target *Web* sites, the System 120 will proceed to step 446 where the System 120 allows Content Providers to establish the minimum and maximum Content Rating levels for its target *Web* sites.

It should be noted that in the preferred embodiment of the invention, each *time* a new *Web* site joins the *Affiliate* *network*, that new *Affiliate* will submit the content of its *Web* site, its content rating, and category to the System staff for review. Although the default setting in the present embodiment is to automatically include all new Affiliates (pending that the content of the *Affiliate*'s *Web* site falls into the appropriate content rating requirements) to host the applicable Content Provider polls, the Content

Providers may access the CPUI to turn off...

...2) start new sponsorships; 5 (3) manage their polls; (4) edit sponsorship content; (5) manage target groups; (6) manage the advertisement library; (7) obtain real-time reports of their polls and ads displayed; (8) obtain real-time billing information; (9) establish content control; (10) update account information; (11) and manage their graphics/creative library. If the Marketer selects to create/start a...

...then use the campaign creation tool/interface (explained later below) to define the details of the campaign. The campaign settings (i.e., poll content, category, *Web* sites, etc.) must be approved by the System staff

before it is cached into the database 130. A Marketer will be able to

...When an 10 is approved, the sponsors can then

select the 10 and choose the poll(s) or Content Provider that they would like to *sponsor* based on the 10 terms at step 520. The System 120 will proceed to

step 522 if the *sponsor* decides to *sponsor* all of the Content Provider's

content or proceed to step 524 if the *sponsor* decides to *sponsor* specific selected polls. After the *sponsor* submits the request, the System staff is notified to obtain approval and authorization of the sponsorship between the *sponsor* and poll Content Provider.

If a Marketer selects to create new polls or modify pre-existing ones, the System 120 proceeds to step 526. As...

...correctly.

In case a Marketer selects to modify any sponsorship campaigns, the System 120 proceeds to step 530. There are only two modifications that a *sponsor* can make once a campaign has begun. Sponsors can either remove/upload a new logo creative that is attached to a particular poll's *sponsor* section at step 532 or add/remove sponsorship content from the Content Provider's poll list at step 534. Depending on how the *sponsor* selected the polls to *sponsor*, it will affect how the System 120 processes new content that is later added by a Content Provider. If the *sponsor* selected to *sponsor* all of the polls from a particular Content Provider, then any new content added by the Content Provider will be automatically accepted and sponsored. However, if only specific polls were selected, new content will not be automatically accepted and sponsored. The *sponsor* will have to continue 10 to select specific polls - whether new or old - to *sponsor* those polls.

In order to run an effective marketing campaign, it is imperative that Marketers be able to pinpoint the target audience to whom specific...

...approve the ad

banner before it is cached in the database 130. All ad banners will be rated based on content, in order to match *Web* site interests and requirements.

After the ad banner has been loaded into the library and approved, it is ready for use in any marketing campaign.

Other options available for Marketers through the MUI include

obtaining real-time reporting of polls/ads displayed 550, obtaining real-time

billing information 560, updating company information 570, establishing content controls 580, managing the graphics/creative library 590. Since these

functions operate in the same manner as described above for Content Providers, the details of their operation will not be repeated here.

The current *advertising* approach becomes more effective when more *Web* sites become Affiliates to the System 120. In order to attract

numerous *Web* sites to join the *network* of Affiliates and use the System 120, the System 120 provides the Affiliates with the right tools and technology to host polls that 1 5...

...basis. To better understand the tools available for Affiliates, the different processes that occur within the present embodiment of the invention as Affiliates access the *Affiliate* User Interface ("AUI") are described in Fig. 6. At step 600, through the AUI, the System 120 allows Affiliates to: (1) ...and display their own internal polls; (2) generate revenue through the display of external polls made by Content Providers, Marketers, or sponsors; (3) configure their *Web* site; (4) obtain real-*time* reports on their content traffic; (5) obtain the latest billing information; (6) monitor what types of polls or advertisements may appear on their *Web* pages; and (7) update its account information.

If Affiliates select to create new internal polls within the AUI, the System 120 proceeds to step 610. From step 610, the *Affiliate* may create a new poll at step 612, modify an existing poll at step 614, or view the results of their internal polls at step 616. The *Affiliate* User Interface 600 ("AUI") is unique in that unlike any other user interface, the AUI allows the Affiliates to modify their internal polls at step 614 whenever and however they like. Unlike external polls, internal polls may be changed in any manner upon the *Affiliate*'s choosing. Affiliates may even implement changes that taint the tally results of the poll responses since it is an internal poll and the decision is solely on that *Affiliate*. Thus, Affiliates can rephrase poll questions and add/delete poll response choices.

Since Affiliates will most likely be concerned with the polls aesthetically matching and...

...privacy, and graphical sections. The Affiliates can also set the default disclaimers for terms of use, privacy, or other rules or have links to *Web* pages displaying the disclosures that they need to provide users. All of these features will be available in the *affiliate* user interface (AUI) described below. The System 120 will also provide Affiliates with a preview opportunity to view their polls before submission into the database...

...change or delete choices of a live poll, since past results screen and data will not match).

The AUI also enables Affiliates to obtain real-*time* reports on their content traffic. The reporting section 620 will *report* various aspects of polling *activity* and *ad* delivery on their *Web* site. Affiliates will be able to view real

time reporting on internal polls 622, external polls 624, and banner ad performance 626 displayed throughout their site. The AUI provides another important feature by providing Affiliates the ability to place the necessary snippet code in their HTML document to display the appropriate polls/ads.

When an *Affiliate* decides to place a poll 162 in their *Web* page 160, the *Affiliate* must install a HTML code into the *Web* page 160 at step 660.

Similar to the ...from external poll and ad delivery, for establishing content controls at step 640 to monitor which types

of sponsors and advertisements are displayed on its *Web* pages, and for updating its account information at step 650. Since *Affiliate* *Web* sites will

have an interest in monitoring what types of polls or advertisements may appear on their *Web* pages, the System 120 will require Content Providers to rate both the content and the appropriate audience for all of its poll content and advertisements...

...Affiliates to establish the Content Rating range such that only those materials that fall within that predetermined minimum and maximum range may appear on their *Web* pages.

Campaign Creation Tool/interface

In order to create the marketing campaign which drive the present invention, Marketers (and Content Providers for the purposes of...

...provided the options of creating, modifying, deleting, and viewing a campaign. To do so, a Marketer accesses a marketing campaign management tool accessible via the *Internet* to Marketers who register and create personal accounts. Once in the marketing campaign management tool, the Marketer can choose to create a marketing campaign. The...

...combination of both polls and advertisements.

An advertisement campaign is created by having the Marketer define for the campaign: (1) a title; (2) a start *date*; (3) an end *date*; and (4) a set of advertisements and selecting an order, weight, or other selection parameter to each ad and a target group to whom each ad should be delivered or other target criteria, such as a particular type of *Web* site. A poll campaign is created by having the Marketer define for the campaign: (1) a title; (2) a start *date*; (3) an end *date*; and (4) a poll question having up to six possible responses, and selecting a target group to whom each poll should be delivered or other target criteria, such as a particular type of *Web* site.

Depending on the type of poll(s) used in the poll campaign additional parameters need to be defined, such as specific answers to a...

...a mini-survey. A poll campaign integrated with advertisements is created by having the Marketer create for the campaign: (1) a title; (2) a start *date*; (3) an end *date*; and (4) a poll question having up to six possible poll responses, and assigning the pairing of advertisements to certain poll responses and selecting an as a particular *Web* site type.

Revenue Model

In a further embodiment of the present invention, a novel revenue model is incorporated to encourage many *Web* sites to become Affiliates. As discussed, the present invention delivers polls to *Affiliate* *Web* sites. Such polls can be designed by Marketers who will be able to create polls having a question and up to six possible responses. The...

...will receive a portion of that fee. Therefore, in an example where the cost of a lead is \$1.00, paid by the Marketer, an *Affiliate* could earn \$0.25 every *time* it generates such a lead by exposing each of its *Web* site viewers to a poll and having each viewer answer that poll. Content providers will also share in the stream of revenues when Marketers use...

...content (branded content, direct response - marketing related, profile related, entertainment/trivia, etc.), and pays them for each response.

When the qualified lead surfs to another *Affiliate* *Web* site, a targeted advertisement based on their previous poll responses(i.e., declared preferences), will be delivered to that user. Marketers are able to associate...

...which ad should be delivered to a given qualified lead. For delivering

an ad to a qualified lead, the Marketer will pay a fee. The *Affiliate* that displayed the delivered ad will receive a portion of that fee and the *Affiliate* that first generated the qualified lead by displaying the poll will also receive a portion of that fee (a residual referral fee). For example, where the cost of delivering an ad to a qualified lead is \$0.50, the *Affiliate* *Web* site receiving and displaying the ad may receive \$0.25, and the *Affiliate* *Web* site that first generated the lead by displaying the poll may receive \$0. It should be appreciated that other revenue models could be used in...

...pricing model (i.e., charging per response). With banner ads and other forms of online ads, performancebased pricing occurs on a "click-through" basis. Most *Web* publishers oppose this ...being shown. The advertisers have an opportunity to display their message only after a user responds to the poll question.

Therefore, advertisers get charged every *time* their message or brands get exposure and the *Web* publishers no longer face the "free" exposure problem.

Modification of User Profiles

In a yet further embodiment of the invention, Users are given the opportunity...

...encouraged to refine and extend their profiles so that targeted content delivered to each user will be more relevant and useful. Users may access a *Web* site dedicated to viewing, modifying, deleting, or adding poll responses that best describe and fit their interests and preferences. When a user accesses this *Web* site, they are presented with a very typical portal interface. If the user has a System User *ID* cookie in their *Web* browser 1 1 2, then the System 120 will read the cookie, identify the specific user, and present the user's personal profile. That user...

...desired. Thus, the System 120 will enable users to control the content of their online ads and polls delivered 1 0 to them within the *network* of *Affiliate* *Web* sites.

Conclusion

Having thus described a preferred embodiment of the method and apparatus for delivering targeted *advertising* and content based on user interaction with online queries on a wide area *network*, it should be apparent 1 5 to those skilled in the art that certain advantages have been achieved. It should also be appreciated that various...

Claim

... polls in a storage area;
searching said archived polls to provide a selected set of said polls;
placing one of said selected polls in a *Web* page;
delivering said *Web* page to permit user viewing and interaction with said one of selected polls; and
building a profile for one of said users based on said...

...terms according to a marketing campaign.

7 The method according to Claim 1, wherein said placing step further comprises embedding a reference link within said *Web* page.

8 The method according to Claim 7, wherein said placing step further comprises embedding said reference link written in JavaScript.

9 The method according to Claim 1, wherein said placing step further comprises positioning said one of said selected polls in a predefined area on said *Web* page.

10 The method according to Claim 1, wherein said delivering step further comprises refreshing said *Web* page and providing results of said one of selected polls within said *Web* page.

11 The method according to Claim 1, wherein said building step further comprises embedding a tag on a user computer.

12 The method according...

...archiving said record in a second storage area.

15 A computer-implemented system for delivering information to users, comprising:
an application server connected to a *network*, said application server coupled to a database comprising an archive of polls, said application server being responsive to requests from a user computer of said *network* for particular polls from said database;
a *Web* host connected to said *network* and comprising a *Web* server and a second database, said *Web* server being responsive to request messages from a user computer for a particular *Web* page to thereby deliver said particular *Web* page selected from said second database to said user computer, said particular *Web* page containing a reference link to polls archived said first database; and
an administrative ...archived polls based on predefined search criteria to provide a selected set of said polls;
10 placing one of said selected polls in a *Web* page;
delivering said *Web* page to permit user viewing and interaction with said one of selected polls; and
building a profile for one of said users based on said...

...according to a marketing campaign.

21 The system according to Claim 15, wherein said placing function further comprises embedding a new reference link within said *Web* page.

22 The system according to Claim 21, wherein said placing function further comprises embedding said new reference link written in JavaScript.

23 The system according to Claim 15, wherein said placing function further comprises positioning said one of said selected polls in a predefined area on said *Web* page.

24 The system according to Claim 15, wherein said delivering function further comprises refreshing said *Web* page and providing results of 10 said one of selected polls within said *Web* page.

25 The system according to Claim 15, wherein said building function further comprises embedding a tag on said user computer.

26 The system according...

>>>Unrecognizable Command
?t s6/full/1

6/9/1 (Item 1 from file: 349)
DIALOG(R) File 349:PCT FULLTEXT
(c) 2004 WIPO/Univentio. All rts. reserv.

00788757 **Image available**

METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR DELIVERY OF TARGETED *ADVERTISING* AND CONTENT
BASED ON USER INTERACTION WITH ONLINE QUERIES ON A WIDE AREA *NETWORK*
PROCEDE ET APPAREIL DE PUBLICITE CIBLEE AU CONTENU BASE SUR DES ENQUETES EN
LIGNE SUR UN RESEAU A GRANDE ECHELLE

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English Abstract

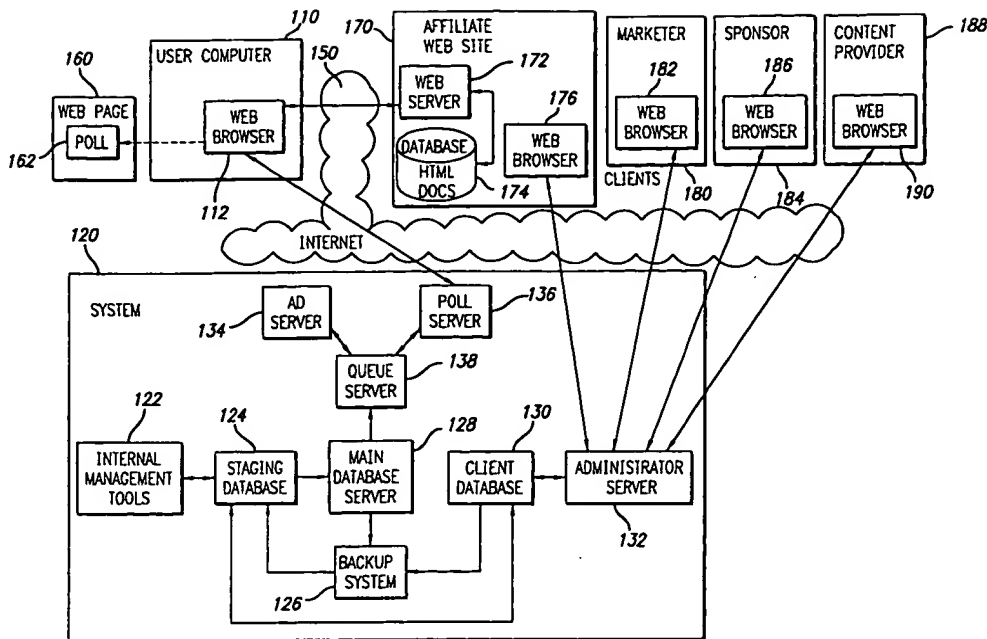
A method and apparatus for creating, archiving, searching, and delivering targeted content within a specified *Web* page are provided. The critical need for businesses to deliver and for computer users to receive targeted advertisements based on a user's previous online interaction is satisfied. As computer users "surf" the *Web*, their interactions with various queries and polls appearing on specified *Web* pages give information about their preferences and dislikes. In a preferred embodiment of the invention, various interactive queries or polls are used to encourage user participation in these surveys. The *advertising* and poll delivery system keeps track of each user's participation in the surveys, and based on the answers a user provides, the system builds a psychographic profile for that particular user. Utilizing a graphical user interface, marketers, *advertising* agencies, and other entities then use this data to create a marketing campaign that will appeal to specific segments of the online *demographic* population. The *advertising* and poll delivery system thus allows marketers to integrate the results of interactive polls into directed *advertising* and to select when and where such *advertising* should be delivered.

French Abstract

L'invention porte sur un procede et un appareil de creation, archivage, recherche et obtention de contenus cibles de pages donnees du *Web* repondant a un besoin pressant des affaires, pour fournir, et des utilisateurs d'ordinateurs, pour acquerir, des publicites cibles fonctions des interactions anterieures en ligne. Alors que les utilisateurs d'ordinateurs naviguent sur le *Web*, leurs interactions avec differentes demandes et sondages apparaissant sur des pages specifiques du *Web* fournissent des indications sur leurs preferences et aversions. Dans l'execution preferee de l'invention, on utilise differents sondages et demandes pour encourager la participation des utilisateurs a des enquetes. Le systeme de publicites et de distribution de sondages fournit des traces de la participation des utilisateurs aux enquetes, et en fonction de leurs reponses, le systeme construit un profil psychologique de l'utilisateur. A l'aide d'interfaces graphiques usagers, les mercaticiens, agences de publicite et autres entites utilisent ces donnees pour creer une campagne commerciale touchant certains segments specifiques de la population en ligne. Le systeme de publicite et de sondages permet donc aux mercaticiens d'integrer les resultats des sondages interactifs dans des publicites dirigees, et de selectionner le moment et le lieu de leur diffusion.

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Detailed Description

METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR DELIVERY OF TARGETED

ADVERTISING AND CONTENT BASED ON USER INTERACTION WITH
ONLINE QUERIES ON A WIDE AREA *NETWORK*
CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

This application claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Application
Serial Number 60/155,071, filed September 21, 1999, pursuant to 35 U.S.C.

(section)1 19(e), which application is specifically incorporated by
reference herein.

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whatsoever.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

The present invention relates generally to a centralized polling system
utilizing *Internet* technology, and more particularly, to aggregating
content and delivering interactive queries or polls and other targeted
content to computer users through *Web* pages.

2. Description of Related Art

Traditionally, *advertising* campaigns have attempted to target and
maximize specific consumer interactivity by designing particular types of
advertisements for a specific media. While somewhat directed, such
advertising campaigns are still broad based appeals to large
demographic

segments, with no material customization to the needs, desires, or
attitudes of one specific individual. With the advent of the *Internet*
and e-commerce, a form of directed *advertising* has developed. On the
Internet, advertisements frequently appear on *Web* pages, often in the
form of a banner ad prominently
located on one or more *Web* pages. Since the *Internet* enables real-
time
interactivity, monitoring, and tracking, it is possible to know when a

user views a *Web* page and when a user selects a particular banner ad. While monitoring and tracking a user's online behavior may be helpful to achieve better focus for future broadcast of advertisements, it does little to address the fact that many people simply ignore banner ads. Because of their frequent use and often unengaging nature, most users simply ignore them.

Without active user participation, the use of banner ads to develop a 1 0 psychographic profile of users is highly limited. To encourage more user participation, other systems have tried incorporating online polls. However, difficulties in establishing and managing a system for online polls have prevented their industry-wide acceptance. Most *Web* sites that use online polls create and manage their own online polling activities. Creating and 1 5 managing their own online polls is quite limited due to the lack of economies of scale. In the case of outsourcing polling software, high costs associated with licensing fees or other conditions of use (e.g., computer users sent to outsourcer's *Web* site to view banner ads) exist as high hurdles.

Thus, there is a long-awaited and much-needed transformation in the way businesses and individuals utilize the *Internet*. As *Internet* portals, e commerce vendors, and various *Web* content publishers continue to search for ways to maximize the interactive capabilities of the *Internet*, the use of online polls has emerged as a popular form of interactive content. The basic mechanics of online polls capture the essence of the *Internet*, namely multimedia interactivity. The *Internet* requires at least two (2) people to send information back and forth in order to interact - whether in the form of chat rooms, message boards, email, *Web* pages, or polls. Whether a business wants to increase brand exposure, syndicate content, identify user interest, or generate leads and collect information, online polls are one of the most effective vehicles to do this on the *Internet*. For example, polls that are onequestion surveys on topics ranging from current events to consumer interests give respondents instant feedback on the tallied results. As poll usage continues to grow across *Web* sites, *Web* publishers and marketers will have an inherent need for a centralized poll management system. It would thus be highly desirable to not only provide a centralized system to manage the polling activities for *Web* publishers, but also to prevent the duplication of user responses, collect useful data on users' declared preferences, and to create the infrastructure to make polling effective and profitable for both *Web* publishers and marketers.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention satisfies the critical need for a centralized polling system with a database having ad serving and user profile tracking capabilities to deliver a total content package to computer users based on their previous online interaction. In a further embodiment of the present invention, the ad serving and user profile tracking capabilities are complemented by email serving and rich-media capabilities as well. The present content delivery system ("System") aggregates content from a variety of entertainment sources (e.g., television, movies, print media) and marketing sources (e.g., branded products and services) to syndicate that content across multiple *Web* sites on behalf of *Web* publishers and marketers/advertisers. As computer users "surf" the *Web*, their interactions

with the various queries or polls appearing on popular *Web* sites give information about their preferences and dislikes. In a preferred embodiment of the invention, various interactive queries or polls are used to encourage user participation in these surveys. The *advertising* and poll delivery system keeps track of each user's participation in the surveys, and based on the answers a user provides, the system builds a psychographic profile for that particular user. Utilizing a graphical user interface, marketers, *advertising* agencies, and other entities use this data to create a marketing campaign that will appeal to specific segments of the online *demographic* population. The System thus allows marketers and content providers to interact with each other and enables marketers to integrate the results of interactive polls into directed *advertising* and to select when and where such *advertising* should be delivered. Furthermore, in order to further refine the psychographic profiles of users, a truly unique feature of the invention allows users to modify their own profile characteristics. Users are encouraged to refine and extend their profiles so that the targeted content delivered to each user will be more relevant and useful. The present invention also implements a revenue model which provides incentives for affiliated *Web* sites to allow the delivery of polls and *advertising* to one or more of its *Web* pages. A more complete understanding of the present invention will be afforded to those skilled in the art, as well as a realization of additional

10 advantages and objects thereof, by a consideration of the following description of the preferred embodiment. References will be made to the appended sheets of drawings that will first be described briefly.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Fig. 1 is a block diagram illustrating the *network* (WAN) in which 15 information is delivered to users in the form of *Web* pages containing polls

and queries in accordance with the invention;

Fig. 2A is an illustration of a sample entertainment opinion poll;

Fig. 2B is an illustration of a sample entertainment trivia poll;

Fig. 2C is an illustration of a sample direct response poll;

Fig. 2D is an illustration of a sample profile poll;

Fig. 2E is an illustration of a sample sweepstakes trivia poll;

Fig. 2F is an illustration of a mini-survey poll;

Fig. 3A is a flowchart outlining the process of tagging and delivering targeted content to a particular user;

Fig. 3B is a flowchart outlining the process of tagging and recording a particular user's answers to a poll;

Fig. 4 is a flowchart outlining the processes that occur within the Content Provider User Interface;

Fig. 5 is a flowchart outlining the processes that occur within the Marketer User Interface; and

Fig. 6 is flowchart outlining the processes that occur within the *Affiliate* User Interface.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

Overview

Individuals who use the *Internet* are often confronted with numerous banners, advertisements, and other information that seek the attention of those individuals. The present invention deploys interactive queries or polls to appeal to and entertain *Internet* users, obtain their interest, encourage their responsive interaction, and collect consumer data based on that interaction.

The collected data is the basis of building meaningful psychographic profiles that are used to target *advertising* to specific individuals instantly or at some point later in *time*.

There are preferably five parties who participate in the operation of an embodiment of the present invention. The first party includes the end-user

("Users"), namely persons who use the *Internet* to read and view various

content existing on the World Wide *Web*. The second party comprises of *Web* site affiliates ("Affiliates") who agree to display interactive queries/polls or certain *advertising* on one or more of its *Web* pages as selected and delivered in accordance with the operation of the present invention. The third party consists of marketers, *advertising* agencies, sponsors, or other entities

("Marketers") that create marketing campaigns, generate poll questions, and select the placement of ads in order to promote specified services and goods.

This group includes parties who wish to *sponsor* certain polls in exchange for

advertising space. The fourth party consists of news agencies, media companies, or any other businesses ("Content Providers") that provide branded poll questions such as entertainment opinion and trivia poll questions, as shown in Figs. 2A and 213, and supply the various poll data to be delivered to users. Finally, the fifth party consist of the entity that operates the *advertising*/poll delivery infrastructure ("System") that determines when

and where to deliver either an advertisement or a poll depending on the nature of the User currently online and the marketing campaign developed by a Marketer.

It should be noted that the Affiliates, Marketers, and Content Providers make up the clients ("Clients") who utilize the System to reach Users in the present invention. Additionally, it should be appreciated that a Client may play multiple roles in its involvement with the present invention. For example, a single company may serve as: (1) an *Affiliate* by having certain polls or advertisements appear on their entertainment *Web* pages; (2) a Marketer by developing and/or sponsoring ad campaigns to appear on other *Web* sites; and (3) a Content Provider by serving as a source for entertainment trivia polls. It should also be appreciated that in the present invention, an *Affiliate* 10 may create many different types of polls from two separate families of polls namely, internal and external polls. As their names suggest, the internal family of polls contain those polls that are created for use only in its own *Web* sites while the external family of polls contain those polls that are created for use on any *Web* site, including their own. Other than this distinction, no other 15 differences exist between the internal and external family of polls. In other System

Referring now to Fig. 1, a block diagram is illustrated of a wide area *network* (WAN) in which information is delivered to users in the form of *Web* pages containing polls and queries in accordance with the invention. It is anticipated that the present System operate with a plurality of computers

which are coupled together on a communications *network*, such as the *Internet* or a WAN. Fig. 1 depicts a *network* that includes a user computer 110 that communicates with the System 120 and the *Affiliate* *Web* site 170 through communication links that include the *Internet* 150. The *Affiliate* 170,

Marketer 180, and Content Provider 188 are also connected to the System 120 and communicate with the administrator server 132 within the System 120 through the *Internet* 150.

Each one of the user 110, *Affiliate* 170, Marketer 180, and Content Provider 188 may include any type of computing device that allows the operator to interactively browse *Web* sites, such as a personal computer (PC) that includes a *Web* browser application 112, 176, 182, 186 or 190 executing

respectively thereon (e.g., Microsoft *Internet* Explorer TM or Netscape Communicator TM). The *Affiliate* *Web* site 170 also includes a *Web* server 172

that can selectively deliver HyperText Markup Language (HTML) documents 0 to the user computer 110 using the HyperText Transport Protocol (HTTP).

Currently, HTML 4.0 is the standard used for generating *Web* documents, though it should be appreciated that other coding conventions could also be used within the scope of the present invention. The *Web* server 172 accesses a store of HTML documents 174 that can be requested, retrieved, and viewed at the user computer 110 via the *Web* browser 112. It should be appreciated that many different user computers may be communicating with the *Web* server 172 at the same *time*.

Within the System 120, the internal management tools 122 are what the internal staff use to manage operation of the present invention. Using the internal management tools 122, the System staff, for example, approve and classify all the content into their right categories, view Client records, and start and stop individual polling/*advertising* campaigns. The internal management tools 122 are connected to a staging database server 124 which holds a copy of the live main database server 128. Since it is unstable to make live changes to the System 120, any and all changes are first made to the staging database server 124 and then replicated to the live main database server 128 in a set interval of *time* (e.g., every 15 minutes). The main database server 128 is the storage area for all activities of the System 120. All of the poll/ad content and User data are stored in the main database server 128 and is backed up all of the *time* in the backup system 126.

The Clients of the System 120 communicate with the administration server 132 to manage their individual accounts within the System 120. For example, through the administration server 132, Affiliates create or change the look and feel of their polls and Marketers run a new marketing poll/ad.

The administration server 132 is connected to the client database 130 where all Client data is stored. All Client activities are saved on the client database 130 and are stored there until the activities are approved by the System staff.

Once the Client activities are approved by the System staff, that Client data is replicated to the staging database 124 which is connected to the client database 130. Within the staging database 124, the Client data is ready to be replicated to the main database server 128 in predetermined intervals (e.g., 10 every 15 minutes). The ad server 134 and the poll server 136 are the main front end components to the *Internet* 150. These cluster of application servers will deliver various polls and advertisements to the user's *Web* browser 112. Neither the ad server 134 nor the poll server 136 have much logic within the components, since both servers rely completely on the queue server 138 for direction.

The queue server 138 works as the "brain" behind the System 120 by communicating with the main database server 128 on one hand and the ad server 134 and poll server 136 on the other hand. The queue server 138 handles three main functions. First, it keeps track of each of the individual *Affiliate* *Web* sites and keeps a list of polls ready to serve per individual *Web* site. Second, it keeps track of individual Users and maintains a list of targeted ads to deliver to each User. Third, it functions as a caching server between the main database server 128 on one hand and the ad server 134 and poll server 136 on the other hand, so that it will not be necessary to constantly read and write to the main database server 128.

Delivered Content

As generally known in the art, a user identifies a *Web* page that is desired to be viewed at the user computer 110 by communicating an HTTP request from the browser application 112. The HTTP request includes the Uniform Resource Locator (URL) of the desired *Web* page, which may

correspond to an HTML document 174 stored at the *Affiliate* *Web* site 170.

The HTTP request is then routed to the *Web* server 172 via the *Internet* 150.

The *Web* server 172 then retrieves/generates the HTML document 174 identified by the URL, and communicates the HTML document across the *Internet* 150 to the browser application 112. The user computer 110 is then able to show the destination *Web* page 160 through its *Web* browser 112.

Unlike a conventional *Web* page, however, the *Affiliate* *Web* page 160 displays additional content such as queries, polls, surveys, sponsored content, or other targeted content, referred to collectively herein as polls 162.

Although for sake of simplicity the various delivered content are referred to as

polls, it should be noted that the delivered content may be any one or a combination of streaming video, games, crossword puzzles, etc., in addition to

polls and surveys. Numerous combinations and possibilities exist because the delivered content comprise of a plurality of panels which together make up the entire package. For example, a simple one-question poll will have at least 15 a question/answer panel and a results panel. An example of a more complex

package of delivered content would be a question/answer panel asking the user which movie he would like to see along with the available movie choices followed by a subsequent panel showing the streaming video.

Queries, polls, surveys, and advertisement appearing on the *affiliate* *Web* page 160 appear in a simple question-and-answer type of format.

Referring back to Figs. 2A and 2B, branded polls such as entertainment opinion 210 and trivia 224 polls seek to draw the users' attention by posing questions related to popular culture, sports, and other interesting topics.

Entertainment opinion 210 and trivia 224 polls are given with multiple choice

answers 214 and 228 that the user can choose within the question/answer panel. A hyperlink to a privacy statement 213 is also provided at the bottom

of the question/answer panel and the results panel of the entertainment opinion 210 poll. Similarly, a hyperlink to a details page 231 is provided at the bottom of the question/answer panel of the entertainment trivia 224 poll.

Clicking on these hyperlinks will pop up a new window with the privacy statement or the detailed information. Once the user makes his choice, the user will select the "Submit" button 216 and 230, respectively, to post his answer into the polling database. The *Affiliate* *Web* page 160 will refresh and the System 120 will provide the user with the results of the poll 218 and 232. The preferred embodiment of the invention will refresh the same exact content of the *Affiliate* *Web* page 160 while replacing the polling box with the results panel (or the next panel to be displayed within the poll).

Therefore, the *Affiliate* *Web* page 160 will receive multiple user impressions.

In another embodiment of the invention, the System 120 will only replace the polling box with the results panel (or the next panel to be displayed within the poll) without refreshing the other contents of the *Affiliate* *Web* page 160. As 10 the System 120 delivers the results of the poll to the user, the System 120 also incorporates delivery of appropriate sponsorship information 222 and 236. In this example, Content Provider

designs "creatives" 212, 2207 226, and 234 that appear above the questions and results.

Other forms of polls may be incorporated into the *Affiliate* *Web* page 1 5 160. Direct response polls 240 as seen in Fig. 2C are aimed at obtaining specific user information. As such, certain incentives such as free CD giveaways may be structured as a question to entice users to volunteer information about themselves. In this example, the user may choose the particular CD he wishes to receive from the multiple choices 242 given in the question/answer panel of the poll. Hyperlinks to the rules 254 and the details 256 of the CD-giveaway are provided at the bottom of the question/answer panel of the poll. Clicking on these hyperlinks will pop up a new window with the privacy statement or the detailed information. Once the user The user then selects the "Submit" button 244 to proceed to the next step. The *Web* page 160 will refresh (again, although the entire *Web* page will refresh, only the contents within the poll box will change in substance) and the user will be asked to provide personal information 248 such as name, mailing address, and e-mail address within the data entry panel 246. Again hyperlinks to the rules 254 and privacy statements 258 are provided at the bottom of the data entry panel 246. Once the user enters the personal information 248 and selects the "Submit" button 250, the *Web* page 160 will refresh once more and the advertiser information will appear as the final display panel 252.

Profile polls as shown in Fig. 2D are utilized to obtain direct information about the user. A profile poll has a similar look and feel to the entertainment opinion and trivia polls and has a question/answer panel 260 and a results panel 262. Although any poll may be used to obtain information to build a particular user's psychographic profile, these profile polls are the most useful since they give specific, detailed information about the user. Other methods of gathering user information can be implemented through sweepstakes trivia polls as shown in Fig. 2E and min-survey polls as shown in Fig. 2F. These polls operate in the same manner as the other polls described above.

In operation of the present invention, an *Internet* user "surfs" from one *Web* page to another until he reaches an *Affiliate* *Web* page 160 containing a poll 162. The poll 162 may be any one of those shown in Fig. 2A through 2D, but will usually consist of a question juxtaposed with a plurality of poll responses. In a preferred embodiment of the invention, a maximum of six poll 1 5 responses is used so as to limit the amount of space taken up on the screen.

The user is encouraged to select what, in his opinion, is the appropriate response to the question posed. Users frequently interact with polls in order to see the poll results and compare themselves against other poll respondents. This unique interactivity and novel method of engaging the user is therefore utilized not only to simply conduct a poll, which is common in the prior art, but primarily to develop a psychographic profile of the user based on his answer to the poll question, and to subsequently tag that user to enable strategic ad and poll delivery in the future. It should be noted that the main purpose of these polls is to start an interactive dialogue with the users, so that the users see multiple screens and interact with targeted content and *advertising*.

Referring back to Fig. 1, in order to deliver such polls 162 within the *Affiliate* *Web* page 160, the particular HTIVIL document 174 that is retrieved has a snippet of code written in JavaScript that instructs the *Web* browser application 1 1 2 of the user computer 1 1 0 to communicate with the poll server 136 of the System 120. Each snippet of code contains

the *Affiliate* *ID* and information concerning the look and feel of the polls that the *Affiliate* has previously defined. The System 120 determines what kind of content to serve within that space designated on the *Affiliate* *Web* page 160. An example of the snippet of code written in JavaScript is as follows.

```
<script language = "javascript" src =  
"http:Hserver.interpolls.com/poll.cfm?clientid=xxxxxxxxxxxxx">  
</script>
```

It should be noted that the above example of the snippet code is for representative purposes only and that the actual snippet code may vary depending on each programming instance. In any event, the snippet code is a Client-side javascript ("CSJS") code that requests further CSJS from the poll 1 0 server 136. Therefore the user's *Web* browser 112 contacts the poll server 136 and the poll server 136 in turn retrieves a poll data, then generates a CSJS code that will display a specific poll and sends it to the user. Once the CSJS reaches the user computer 110, the user's *Web* browser 112 will execute the code and generate the poll.

Tagging a User

As mentioned earlier, the online interaction between the user and the poll forms the basis on which that user's psychographic profile is developed.

As such, tagging a user after that user is confronted with a *Web* page 160 containing a poll 162 is critical in order to track that individual's behavior for future delivery of targeted *advertising*. One of ordinary skill in the art would appreciate that several methods can be used to tag the user. The user's IP address and the placement of a "cookie" on the user's machine are two ways by which a user can be tagged (i.e., identified for future use). Each method has its limitations, however. IP addresses can be shared among a number of people who use the same proxy, and therefore noting a user's IP address is not a suitable way to uniquely identify one single person. Also, users who connect through an *Internet* Service Provider (ISP) get a dynamically assigned IP address. Therefore, a user is most likely to have a different IP address each *time* he connects through an ISP.

A cookie is a piece of information that a *Web* site, using the user *Web*

browser's 112 facilities, places on the hard disk drive of a user's machine for future use. Cookies are useful because they allow a *Web* server to store its own information about a user on the user's own computer. Typically, a cookie stores a unique number identifying a user. Thus, although cookies themselves do not usually contain a user's preferences, the unique identification number is used to access a user's particular preferences stored in the System user database. Additionally, since cookies are placed onto the user's machine and therefore can uniquely identify a single user, or more specifically, a single computer terminal, the placement of a cookie file on the user computer 1 1 0 after the user responds to a poll question would be the preferred method of tagging users.

1 0 The use of cookies to identify the different users has its limitations, however. One drawback to using cookies is that some users block cookies to prevent the clutter of their hard disk drives with the placement of cookie files.

Another limitation lies in the fact that to be of use, the System 120 that

supports the embodiment of the present invention must be able to read a user's cookie file to determine that particular user's historical interactions with poll questions. Cookie files can only be read, however, by the *Web* site that creates them. Specifically, the Uniform Resource Locator (URL) specified in the cookie must be the same as the *Web* site

that the user is surfing in order for the browser to send the cookie to the *Web* site. Therefore, in the preferred embodiment of the invention, the cookies are placed on the user computer 110 by the System 120 and not by the individual *Affiliate* *Web* site 170. Since an *Affiliate* *web* page 160 may contain information from multiple sources, as the user's *Web* browser 176 communicates with the System 120 to retrieve the next set of javascript code, the System 120 can read and place the cookie using one centralized domain name of the System 120. When it later becomes necessary to examine the user computer 110 for a tag, the poll server 136 can do so by accessing the cookie file that it placed previously.

As such, referring to Fig. 3A, at step 310, when a user retrieves a specific *Web* page 160 (i.e., a particular URL) of an *Affiliate* *Web* site 170, the user's *Web* browser 112 contacts the System 120 for a new poll at step 312.

Then, at step 314, the System 120 determines whether that user has previously interacted with a poll by searching for the System User *ID* cookie.

If the user does not have a System User *ID* cookie, then the System serves the next poll in the *Affiliate* *Web* site's queue of polls to serve at step 316. In the case the user has a System User *ID* cookie set, then the System 120 retrieves the System User *ID* cookie at step 318 and pulls up the user's voting history at step 320. Next, at step 322, the System 120 goes through in sequence of all the polls in the *Affiliate* *Web* site's sequence and looks for a poll that the user has not yet voted. If such a poll is found at step 324, then the first of such poll found is served to the user computer 110 at step 326. Otherwise, if no such poll is found at step 324, then the System 120 proceeds to step 328 where the results of random polls that the user has previously answered and fits in the current *Affiliate* *Web* site's categories are shown.

Referring now to Fig. 3B, once the poll is delivered, the user interacts with the poll and answers the presented questions at step 330. Then, at step 332, the Client-side JavaScript embedded in the poll sets a temporary cookie to signal that the user has just voted. Next, at step 334, the user's *Web* browser 112 contacts the System 120 and the user's vote is recorded. The System 120 then determines whether the user already has a System User *ID* cookie at step 336. If the user does not have a System User *ID* cookie, the System 120 proceeds to step 338 where the new User *ID* and a new User Profile is created in the System database. Then at step 340 the System User *ID* cookie is set and the poll results are returned to the user's *Web* browser at step 344. If it is determined at step 336 that the user already has a System User *ID* cookie, the poll information is added to the user's voting history at step 342 and the poll results are returned to the user's *Web* browser at step 344.

Client Interface

The present invention provides a forum in which Clients (i.e., Content Providers, Marketers, and Affiliates) utilize polling technology and targeted

content to effectively conduct *advertising* and marketing campaigns. To facilitate the interaction of these several Clients with the System 120, the preferred embodiment of the invention provides a Client Interface to enable the Content Providers, Marketers, and Affiliates to perform the necessary functions within the System 120. The different processes that occur within the present embodiment when Content Providers utilize the Content Provider

User Interface ("CPUI") are described in Fig. 4. At step 400, when the Content Providers access the CPUI via the *Web* browser 190 on their computer 188, the Content Providers have several options available. Using the CPUI, the Content Providers can: (1) manage their polls; (2) obtain realtime reports on their content traffic; (3) obtain latest billing information; (4) control the display of their content; (5) update account information; and (6) 0 manage their graphics/creatives library.

If a Content Provider selects the option of managing their polls, the System 120 proceeds to step 410. If the Content Provider wishes to create a new poll, the System will proceed to step 412 to create the new poll. At step

412, Content Providers are required to categorize and define the content rating for the poll that they create. On the other hand, if the Content Provider desires to edit a previously created poll, then the System 120 will proceed to step 414. Here at step 414, only the simplest modifications are allowed. If the poll changes are too drastic, the Content Provider will need to create a new poll. Spelling errors or slight wording changes are situations in which modification of that poll is possible. However, Content Providers can neither delete an answer choice of a poll nor rephrase a poll question in a different way because such changes will taint the present voting record for that poll.

Once the Content Provider has finished either creating or modifying a particular poll, the poll is then submitted for approval at step 416 to ensure that every piece of the created content is appropriate and categorized correctly. If the poll fails to meet the required criteria, the poll is rejected at step 417 and the Content Provider is led back to the CPUI at step 400. If the poll does meet the required criteria, then the poll is placed into the System Content Provider poll library within the database 130 and the Content Provider is led back to the CPUI at step 400. With such a strict approval process and organizational structure, the System Content Provider poll library serves as an invaluable tool at a later *time*, since potential sponsors search this library for the appropriate set of polls to *sponsor*.

Content Providers may also choose to receive real-*time* reports on their content traffic through the use of the CPUI. Upon the Content Provider's selection of this option, the System 120 proceeds to step 420 where the System 120 will provide reports on how the Content Provider's polls are performing and generating revenue. The data will display and analyze polls, sponsors, *Web* sites, responses, and Users. If the Content Provider selects a particular *sponsor* and a specific *date* range, the System 120 will proceed to step 422 and will furnish the following type reports: (i) number of impressions per poll; (ii) number of poll responses per poll; (iii) response yield percentage per poll; (iv) total number of poll impressions; (v) total number of responses; (vi) total response yield percentage; (vii) number of responses per answer choice; (viii) response yield percentage per answer choice; (ix) volunteered information such as answers to a specific question, mailing address, email address; (x) the different *Web* sites to which the polls were delivered; and (xi) the categories of the different *Web* sites to which the polls were delivered.

Affiliate *Web* sites that display the various polls and advertisements are grouped into a plurality of different categories. In the preferred embodiment of the invention, for example, the categories are: (1) Autos; (2) Business and Finance; (3) E-Commerce and Shopping; (4) Entertainment; (5) Teens; (6) during the registration process. Below these main categories, there will also be sub-categories available to more accurately describe the various *Web* sites as the *network* of affiliates grows. The categorization process is used for Content Providers and Marketers to determine which *Web* sites should display their poll and advertisement campaigns.

If the Content Provider selects a particular poll and a specific *date* range, the System 120 will proceed to step 424 and will furnish the

following type of reports: (i) number of impressions delivered; (ii) number of responses; (iii) number of responses per answer; (iv) response yield percentage; (v) response yield percentage per answer choice; (vi) list of sponsors; (vii) number of responses per *sponsor*; (viii) number of responses per answer choice per *sponsor*; (ix) response yield percentage per *sponsor*; and (x) response yield percentage per answer choice per *sponsor*. These reports enable the Content Providers to view which polls are popular and which are not, thus allowing the Content Providers to adjust their new content 0 accordingly.

Content Providers may also receive the latest billing information through the CPU1. At step 430, the System 120 provides Content Providers with information concerning how much revenue they have earned from past and current periods, as well as other account and billing information. When 5 the Content Provider selects a particular *sponsor* and a specific *date* range 432, the System 120 provides the following types of reports: (i) revenue calculated per *sponsor* per marketing campaign; and (ii) dollar amount representing the total number of poll responses by sponsored poll multiplied by the unit revenue per response.

There are other options available for Content Providers through the CPU1. If Content Providers choose to establish content control - decide as to what type of *Web* sites are able to host and display their content ("target *Web* sites"), the System 120 will proceed to step 440. As mentioned previously, in the preferred embodiment of the invention, Content Providers display their polls and *advertising* material on their own *Web* pages as well as on the *Affiliate* *Web* pages. Thus, it is important for the Content Providers to have control over which Affiliates host and display their polls and *advertising* content. There will be instances where Content Providers will not want their branded content being displayed at certain types of *Web* sites because of the content contained in those *Web* sites. For example, a movie studio that provides entertainment trivia polls may not wish that their logo, trademark, or other associated *advertising* material appear on adult-oriented *Web* sites. In order to facilitate this control, the System 120 at step 440 provides Content Providers with several content control choices. Upon choosing, a Content Provider may, at step 442, create a list (i.e., exclusion list) of *Affiliate* *Web* sites which should be excluded from hosting and displaying that Content Provider's polls and sponsored advertisements. In addition, the Content Provider may, at step 444, edit their pre-existing exclusion list.

The Content Providers can also select which Affiliates will display their polls and sponsored advertisements by setting a "Content Rating" range of target *Web* sites. In the preferred embodiment of the invention, all Affiliates 1 0 are required to rate both the content and appropriate audience for the material appearing on their *Web* pages through an established Content Rating guideline (i.e., Rated G, PG-13, R, etc.). Thus, the System 120 allows Content Providers another option in addition to the direct exclusion lists to monitor which *Affiliate* *Web* sites will host and display their polls and advertisements. If Content Providers select to establish the Content Rating range of the target *Web* sites, the System 120 will proceed to step 446 where the System 120 allows Content Providers to establish the minimum and maximum Content Rating levels for its target *Web* sites.

It should be noted that in the preferred embodiment of the invention,

each *time* a new *Web* site joins the *Affiliate* *network*, that new *Affiliate* will submit the content of its *Web* site, its content rating, and category to the System staff for review. Although the default setting in the present embodiment is to automatically include all new Affiliates (pending that the content of the *Affiliate*'s *Web* site falls into the appropriate content rating requirements) to host the applicable Content Provider polls, the Content Providers may access the CPUI to turn off this default option. In the event a Content Provider chooses to turn off this default option, that Content Provider must then examine the list of new Affiliates and approve the list for content serving.

The System 120 also provides Content Providers the option of updating any of their company information. If the Content Providers wish to modify their company information, the System 120 proceeds to step 450.

From this point, the System allows Content Providers to update their contact information at step 454, update payment method/information at step 452, and update company description/URL at step 456. Within the CPUI, Content Providers may also create new and modify pre-existing designs ("creatives") that exist in their library of logos. If the Content Providers choose to make new designs or modifications, the System 120 proceeds to step 460. Upon the Content Provider's choice, the System 120 will proceed to step 462 to create new designs and upload them to the logo library or proceed to step 464 to add/remove old creatives. However, before the creatives are permanently saved to the logo library, the creatives must be approved by the System staff.

Referring to Fig. 5, the different processes that occur within the present embodiment of the invention as Marketers access the Marketer User Interface ("MUI") are described. At step 500, through the MUI, the System 120 allows Marketers to: (1) start new marketing campaigns; (2) start new sponsorships; (3) manage their polls; (4) edit sponsorship content; (5) manage target groups; (6) manage the advertisement library; (7) obtain real-*time* reports of their polls and ads displayed; (8) obtain real-*time* billing information; (9) establish content control; (10) update account information; (11) and manage their graphics/creative library. If the Marketer selects to create/start a campaign, the System 120 will proceed to step 510 at which point the Marketer will have the option of creating a new campaign or viewing/modifying a previously created campaign. If the Marketer decides to create a new campaign, arrangements must first be structured offline. Once the offline arrangements

have been made, the Marketer can select the create new campaign option and the System then proceeds to step 612 and requests the Marketer to submit an insertion order (10). An insertion order is a legally binding document that defines the terms of the campaign. When a Marketer initiates their campaign with the System 120, they must first select the pre-approved (10) campaign, then use the campaign creation tool/interface (explained later below) to define the details of the campaign. The campaign settings (i.e., poll content, category, *Web* sites, etc.) must be approved by the System staff before it is cached into the database 130. A Marketer will be able to modify a campaign at step 514 as long as the changes fall within the parameters of the original 10. Modifications will also need approval by the System staff before being implemented. Marketers may add/subtract polls, target groups, and ads.

To start a sponsorship, the arrangements must again be first structured offline. Once the offline arrangement have been made, marketers must choose the sponsorship option and proceed to step 516. The System 120 will then require the sponsors to submit an 10 at step 518 before they

can start a sponsorship campaign. When an 10 is approved, the sponsors can then select the 10 and choose the poll(s) or Content Provider that they would like to *sponsor* based on the 10 terms at step 520. The System 120 will proceed to step 522 if the *sponsor* decides to *sponsor* all of the Content Provider's content or proceed to step 524 if the *sponsor* decides to *sponsor* specific selected polls. After the *sponsor* submits the request, the System staff is notified to obtain approval and authorization of the sponsorship between the *sponsor* and poll Content Provider.

If a Marketer selects to create new polls or modify pre-existing ones, the System 120 proceeds to step 526. As mentioned previously, there is a strict approval process in the creation of and modification of polls. The System staff must approve the poll (i.e., content, rating, category, etc.) before it is saved into their poll library. Once a poll is created, only the simplest modifications are allowed. Only specific aspects of polls can be modified without adversely affecting the integrity and results of that poll (e.g., cannot change or delete choices of a live poll, since past results screen and data will not match). If the poll changes are too drastic, the Marketers will need to create a new poll. Spelling errors or slight wording changes are acceptable modifications. In any event, the System staff must review all activities of poll creation and modification in order to ensure that the polling content is appropriate and that each poll is categorized correctly.

In case a Marketer selects to modify any sponsorship campaigns, the System 120 proceeds to step 530. There are only two modifications that a *sponsor* can make once a campaign has begun. Sponsors can either remove/upload a new logo creative that is attached to a particular poll's *sponsor* section at step 532 or add/remove sponsorship content from the Content Provider's poll list at step 534. Depending on how the *sponsor* selected the polls to *sponsor*, it will affect how the System 120 processes new content that is later added by a Content Provider. If the *sponsor* selected to *sponsor* all of the polls from a particular Content Provider, then any new content added by the Content Provider will be automatically accepted and sponsored. However, if only specific polls were selected, new content will not be automatically accepted and sponsored. The *sponsor* will have to continue 10 to select specific polls - whether new or old - to *sponsor* those polls.

In order to run an effective marketing campaign, it is imperative that Marketers be able to pinpoint the target audience to whom specific advertisements will be directed. Thus, at step 540, Marketers may use the MUI to create target groups - an arbitrary list of users who have responded to 15 polls and are created for targeting purposes. Marketers create target groups by selecting the poll questions and the possible response combinations for the group of Users the Marketers wish to target. Once the target groups have been created and named, they can be used for targeting any poll/ad campaign. For example, a Marketer can make a target group called "Users Who Invest Online" by selecting the question/answer combination of.

Question - "Do you invest online?" and Answer - "Yes or No". All of the respondents to this poll question and specific response will be the target group that receives future advertisements or polls from the advertiser as related to online investing options. The System staff will also be able to create target groups internally. In this manner, high quality target groups classified into different categories will be available for all Clients. The System staff will have access to all the profiles and will be able to eliminate clutter and identify the more valuable profiles for Marketers to target.

Marketers may also manage their ad library using the MUL Upon the Marketer's selection of this option, the System 120 proceeds to step 546.

This function allows the advertiser to upload ad banners into their own library.

Once the ad banner is uploaded, the System staff must approve the ad banner before it is cached in the database 130. All ad banners will be rated based on content, in order to match *Web* site interests and requirements.

After the ad banner has been loaded into the library and approved, it is ready for use in any marketing campaign.

Other options available for Marketers through the MUI include obtaining real-*time* reporting of polls/ads displayed 550, obtaining real-*time* billing information 560, updating company information 570, establishing content controls 580, managing the graphics/creative library 590. Since these functions operate in the same manner as described above for Content Providers, the details of their operation will not be repeated here.

The current *advertising* approach becomes more effective when more *Web* sites become Affiliates to the System 120. In order to attract numerous *Web* sites to join the *network* of Affiliates and use the System 120, the System 120 provides the Affiliates with the right tools and technology to host polls that 1 5 generate revenues on a per-response basis. To better understand the tools available for Affiliates, the different processes that occur within the present embodiment of the invention as Affiliates access the *Affiliate* User Interface ("AUI") are described in Fig. 6. At step 600, through the AUI, the System 120 allows Affiliates to: (1) either create and display their own internal polls; (2) generate revenue through the display of external polls made by Content Providers, Marketers, or sponsors; (3) configure their *Web* site; (4) obtain real-*time* reports on their content traffic; (5) obtain the latest billing information; (6) monitor what types of polls or advertisements may appear on their *Web* pages; and (7) update its account information.

If Affiliates select to create new internal polls within the AUI, the System 120 proceeds to step 610. From step 610, the *Affiliate* may create a new poll at step 612, modify an existing poll at step 614, or view the results of their internal polls at step 616. The *Affiliate* User Interface 600 ("AUI") is unique in that unlike any other user interface, the AUI allows the Affiliates to modify their internal polls at step 614 whenever and however they like. Unlike external polls, internal polls may be changed in any manner upon the *Affiliate*'s choosing. Affiliates may even implement changes that taint the tally results of the poll responses since it is an internal poll and the decision is solely on that *Affiliate*. Thus, Affiliates can rephrase poll questions and add/delete poll response choices.

Since Affiliates will most likely be concerned with the polls aesthetically matching and blending with the rest of the content on their site, the System 120 will allow Affiliates to enter all of the necessary parameters needed to achieve the right look. Specifically, the Affiliates can control the border, background, fonts, sizes, colors for every part of the poll - header, question, responses, disclaimers, privacy, and graphical sections. The Affiliates can also set the default disclaimers for terms of use, privacy, or other rules or have links to *Web* pages displaying the disclosures that they need to provide users. All of these features will be available in the *affiliate* user interface (AUI) described below. The System 120 will also provide Affiliates with a preview opportunity to view their polls before submission into the database 130.

5 However, even the Affiliates will not be allowed to implement changes

to polls that would adversely affect the integrity and results of that poll (e.g., cannot change or delete choices of a live poll, since past results screen and data will not match).

The AU[also enables Affiliates to obtain real-*time* reports on their content traffic. The reporting section 620 will *report* various aspects of polling *activity* and *ad* delivery on their *Web* site. Affiliates will be able to view real *time* reporting on internal polls 622, external polls 624, and banner ad performance 626 displayed throughout their site. The AUI provides another important feature by providing Affiliates the ability to place the necessary snippet code in their HTML document to display the appropriate polls/ads.

When an *Affiliate* decides to place a poll 162 in their *Web* page 160, the *Affiliate* must install a HTML code into the *Web* page 160 at step 660.

Similar to the functions of the other user interfaces, the AUI provides Affiliates with the tools for obtaining the latest billing information at step 630 to keep track of the amount of revenue earned from external poll and ad delivery, for establishing content controls at step 640 to monitor which types of sponsors and advertisements are displayed on its *Web* pages, and for updating its account information at step 650. Since *Affiliate* *Web* sites will have an interest in monitoring what types of polls or advertisements may appear on their *Web* pages, the System 120 will require Content Providers to rate both the content and the appropriate audience for all of its poll content and advertisements through the previously mentioned Content Rating system.

As such, the System 120 at step 640 will allow Affiliates to establish the Content Rating range such that only those materials that fall within that predetermined minimum and maximum range may appear on their *Web* pages.

Campaign Creation Tool/interface

In order to create the marketing campaign which drive the present invention, Marketers (and Content Providers for the purposes of generating branded content polls) are provided the options of creating, modifying, deleting, and viewing a campaign. To do so, a Marketer accesses a marketing campaign management tool accessible via the *Internet* to Marketers who register and create personal accounts. Once in the marketing campaign management tool, the Marketer can choose to create a marketing campaign. The Marketer is then presented with three options of creating: (1) an advertisement campaign; (2) a poll campaign; or (3) a campaign having a combination of both polls and advertisements.

An advertisement campaign is created by having the Marketer define for the campaign: (1) a title; (2) a start *date*; (3) an end *date*; and (4) a set of advertisements and selecting an order, weight, or other selection parameter to each ad and a target group to whom each ad should be delivered or other target criteria, such as a particular type of *Web* site. A poll campaign is created by having the Marketer define for the campaign: (1) a title; (2) a start *date*; (3) an end *date*; and (4) a poll question having up to six possible responses, and selecting a target group to whom each poll should be delivered or other target criteria, such as a particular type of *Web* site.

Depending on the type of poll(s) used in the poll campaign additional parameters need to be defined, such as specific answers to a trivia poll question or topics of a mini-survey. A poll campaign integrated with advertisements is created by having the Marketer create for the campaign: (1) a title; (2) a start *date*; (3) an end *date*; and (4) a poll question having up to six possible poll responses, and assigning the pairing of advertisements to certain poll responses and selecting an order, weight or other selection parameter to each ad, and a target group to whom each ad should be delivered or other target criteria, such as a particular *Web* site type.

Revenue Model

In a further embodiment of the present invention, a novel revenue model is incorporated to encourage many *Web* sites to become Affiliates. As discussed, the present invention delivers polls to *Affiliate* *Web* sites. Such polls can be designed by Marketers who will be able to create polls having a question and up to six possible responses. The poll is designed to appeal to and elicit answers from potential buyers of a particular product or service (i.e., potential qualified leads). Once a user responds to a poll by submitting a response, the user becomes a "qualified lead". For enabling the generation of this qualified lead, the Marketer will pay a fee for each lead generated.

Affiliates who received and displayed the poll question that generated the lead will receive a portion of that fee. Therefore, in an example where the cost of a lead is \$1.00, paid by the Marketer, an *Affiliate* could earn \$0.25 every *time* it generates such a lead by exposing each of its *Web* site viewers to a poll and having each viewer answer that poll. Content providers will also share in the stream of revenues when Marketers use branded poll content in their campaigns. In short, the present invention provides Affiliates with diverse polls and sticky content (branded content, direct response - marketing related, profile related, entertainment/trivia, etc.), and pays them for each response.

When the qualified lead surfs to another *Affiliate* *Web* site, a targeted advertisement based on their previous poll responses (i.e., declared preferences), will be delivered to that user. Marketers are able to associate up to five different ads per set of declared preferences and are able to provide criteria that will determine which ad should be delivered to a given qualified lead. For delivering an ad to a qualified lead, the Marketer will pay a fee. The *Affiliate* that displayed the delivered ad will receive a portion of that fee and the *Affiliate* that first generated the qualified lead by displaying the poll will also receive a portion of that fee (a residual referral fee). For example, where the cost of delivering an ad to a qualified lead is \$0.50, the *Affiliate* *Web* site receiving and displaying the ad may receive \$0.25, and the *Affiliate* *Web* site that first generated the lead by displaying the poll may receive \$0. It should be appreciated that other revenue models could be used in combination with the poll and ad delivery system and marketer campaign management system. The example provided above is just one illustration of how the pricing may be set and the actual prices may vary from one Client to another.

It should be noted that the interaction with online polls creates ideal 1 5 opportunities for a performance-based pricing model (i.e., charging per response). With banner ads and other forms of online ads, performancebased pricing occurs on a "click-through" basis. Most *Web* publishers oppose this pricing model since advertisers often receive "free" exposure of the ads or brands when user click-throughs do not occur. Online polls are the perfect solution to this problem, since polls may be tailored so that only the poll question and its answer choices are initially displayed, without ads or advertisers' brands being shown. The advertisers have an opportunity to

display their message only after a user responds to the poll question.

Therefore, advertisers get charged every *time* their message or brands get exposure and the *Web* publishers no longer face the "free" exposure problem.

Modification of User Profiles

In a yet further embodiment of the invention, Users are given the opportunity to modify their own profile characteristics. Users are encouraged to refine and extend their profiles so that targeted content delivered to each user will be more relevant and useful. Users may access a *Web* site dedicated to viewing, modifying, deleting, or adding poll responses that best describe and fit their interests and preferences. When a user accesses this *Web* site, they are presented with a very typical portal interface. If the user has a System User *ID* cookie in their *Web* browser 1 1 2, then the System 120 will read the cookie, identify the specific user, and present the user's personal profile. That user will then be able to look at past polls that he previously answered and can change those preference if desired. The System 120 will also present the user with an option to browse through previously unanswered polls and ask the user to answer those polls if desired. Thus, the System 120 will enable users to control the content of their online ads and polls delivered 1 0 to them within the *network* of *Affiliate* *Web* sites.

Conclusion

Having thus described a preferred embodiment of the method and apparatus for delivering targeted *advertising* and content based on user interaction with online queries on a wide area *network*, it should be apparent 1 5 to those skilled in the art that certain advantages have been achieved. It should also be appreciated that various modifications, adaptations, and alternative embodiments thereof may be made within the scope and spirit of the present invention. The invention is further defined by the following claims.

CLAIMS

Claim

1 . A method of providing remote users with a centralized polling environment, comprising the steps of:
creating polls;
archiving said polls in a storage area;
searching said archived polls to provide a selected set of said polls;
placing one of said selected polls in a *Web* page;
delivering said *Web* page to permit user viewing and interaction with said one of selected polls; and
building a profile for one of said users based on said interaction.

2 The method according to Claim 1, wherein said creating step further comprises forming a question and a plurality of possible answer choices for each of said polls.

3 The method according to Claim 1 , wherein said archiving step further comprises seeking and obtaining approval based on contents of each of said polls.

4 The method according to Claim 3, wherein said archiving step further comprises rating and indexing said contents according to predefined guidelines.

5 The method according to Claim 1 , wherein said searching step further comprises searching for matching terms within poll content descriptors associated with respective ones of said archived polls.

6 The method according to Claim 5, wherein said searching step

further comprises defining said matching terms according to a marketing campaign.

7 The method according to Claim 1, wherein said placing step further comprises embedding a reference link within said *Web* page.

8 The method according to Claim 7, wherein said placing step further comprises embedding said reference link written in JavaScript.

9 The method according to Claim 1, wherein said placing step further comprises positioning said one of said selected polls in a predefined area on said *Web* page.

10 The method according to Claim 1, wherein said delivering step further comprises refreshing said *Web* page and providing results of said one of selected polls within said *Web* page.

11 The method according to Claim 1, wherein said building step further comprises embedding a tag on a user computer.

12 The method according to Claim 1, wherein said building step further comprises embedding a tag comprising a cookie.

13 The method according to Claim 1, wherein said building step further comprises keeping a record of said interaction.

14 The method according to Claim 13, wherein said building step further comprises archiving said record in a second storage area.

15 A computer-implemented system for delivering information to users, comprising:

an application server connected to a *network*, said application server coupled to a database comprising an archive of polls, said application server being responsive to requests from a user computer of said *network* for

particular polls from said database;

a *Web* host connected to said *network* and comprising a *Web* server and a second database, said *Web* server being responsive to request messages from a user computer for a particular *Web* page to thereby deliver

said particular *Web* page selected from said second database to said user

computer, said particular *Web* page containing a reference link to polls archived said first database; and

an administrative processor coupled to said application server, said administrative processor executing instructions to provide the functions of:

creating new polls;

archiving said new polls in said first database;

searching said archived polls based on predefined search criteria to provide a selected set of said polls;

placing one of said selected polls in a *Web* page;

delivering said *Web* page to permit user viewing and interaction with said one of selected polls; and

building a profile for one of said users based on said interaction.

16 The system according to Claim 15, wherein said creating function further comprises forming a question and a plurality of possible answer choices for each of said new polls.

17 The system according to Claim 15, wherein said archiving function further comprises seeking and obtaining approval based on contents of each of said new polls.

18 The system according to Claim 17, wherein said archiving function further comprises rating and indexing said contents according to predefined guidelines.

19 The system according to Claim 15, wherein said searching

function further comprises searching for matching terms within poll content descriptors associated with respective ones of said archived polls.

20 The system according to Claim 19, wherein said searching function further comprises defining said matching terms according to a marketing campaign.

21 The system according to Claim 15, wherein said placing function further comprises embedding a new reference link within said *Web* page.

22 The system according to Claim 21, wherein said placing function further comprises embedding said new reference link written in JavaScript.

23 The system according to Claim 15, wherein said placing function further comprises positioning said one of said selected polls in a predefined area on said *Web* page.

24 The system according to Claim 15, wherein said delivering function further comprises refreshing said *Web* page and providing results of 1 0 said one of selected polls within said *Web* page.

25 The system according to Claim 15, wherein said building function further comprises embedding a tag on said user computer.

26 The system according to Claim 25, wherein said building function further comprises embedding a tag comprising a cookie.

27 The system according to Claim 25, wherein said building function further comprises keeping a record of said interaction.

28 The system according to Claim 27, wherein said building function further comprises archiving said record in said first database.

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